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ABSTRACT

Part 1 of this paper inquires into how teachers can use portfolios in professional development; part 2 takes one component, a review of the contents of a portfolio, and puts it into action with practicing teachers and student teachers. Part 1 focuses on a teacher evaluation model that includes working with a peer, while part 2 focuses on the portfolio as a professional growth experience to be shared with a student teacher, emphasizing portfolios as a valuable tool for teacher evaluation and an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their own practices. The proposed model calls for the teacher to develop a portfolio in conjunction with review by a partner. Although contents of the portfolio would be up to the teacher, it should contain something indicative of the teacher's educational philosophy, an aspect that includes journal or reflective entries, and an indication of professional development by documenting reading, courses, or presentations. The workshops described in part 2 took teachers to the Boston (Massachusetts) area through development of a portfolio. Teachers responded favorably and presented completed portfolios. One diagram represents the model. Attachments include some framing documents for the portfolio. (Contains three references.) (SLD)

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Teacher Portfolio: Reflection in Action

Part 1

An Alternative to Traditional Teacher Evaluation

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Course Requirement for Catherine Krupnick

**Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational
Research Association, April 1994, New Orleans**

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Introduction:

This alternative model was designed as part of a supervision course taken at the Harvard Graduate School of Education with Professor Catherine Krupnick. The final assignment for the course was to create an alternative model for supervision as opposed to the traditional one where a principal observes a teacher and writes an evaluation report. In addition to designing the model in this paper, I actually made a portfolio following the guidelines I set up on pages 8-9, "Contents of a Portfolio."

The "Contents of the Portfolio" (pages 8-9 in this paper) became the framework for three workshops held on site at the Dallin School in Arlington and **Part 2 of Teacher Portfolio: Reflection in Action**. The paper, "*Creating Teacher Portfolios*," summarizes the workshops and the experience of these classroom teachers. As you will note in the "*Creating Teacher Portfolios*" paper, I have not used the evaluation component that is described in Part 1, but instead have moved toward a reflective professional development model for teachers. Reflection in action for the purpose of professional development and sharing ideas with student teachers became the goal of these workshops.

Part 1 Teacher Portfolio: Reflection in Action was the beginning of my inquiry about how teachers could use portfolios. **Part 2 Teacher Portfolio: Reflection in Action**, "*Creating Teacher Portfolios*" paper takes one component of Part 1, "Contents of the Portfolio," and actually puts it into action with practicing teachers and student teachers. Part 1 focuses on teacher evaluation model of working with a peer and Part 2 focuses on the portfolio as a professional growth experience to be shared with a student teacher. Both papers provide a context for reflective practice and the opportunity for practicing teachers to think about and share their work.

Teacher Portfolio: Reflection In Action

Background Information

The idea of using a portfolio to assess work is not an original one. In the past few years the use of portfolio has been used with students as a way to evaluate their skills. Most often with literacy, but now in math and other subject areas, the idea of collecting student papers and reviewing them for significant progress has caught on with schools and policy makers. The state of Vermont Department of Education has even adopted the model for its state competencies.

The use of portfolios as a tool for teachers is far less common. In Bonnie Sunstein's book, Portfolio Portraits, a reader observes that most of the book is geared to the idea of teachers using portfolios with their students. However, there are two chapters that highlight the ways in which a portfolio can be used as a tool for teachers and administrators. In one chapter, *Staying the Course: One Superintendent* relays the story of a his efforts to document his own work. Another chapter, *Teachers Evaluate Their Own Literacy* highlights the ways in which classroom teachers modeled the portfolio process before sharing in with their students, as part of a college course.

Some of the teachers' comments were:

As skeptical as I have been about the portfolio, I realize it gave me a further nudge to focus on myself even more, and most important, it has convinced me of the value of reflecting and evaluating what goes on and why...I like the concept of a "living" portfolio. It is not cast in stone. It breathes and changes as I do. I have been encouraged to look into myself- what makes me who I feel I am -since beginning this portfolio.

Donna Galella
Teacher, grade 8
New York, New York

Another teacher who was working on a literacy portfolio said:

The portfolio will guide the quality of my work. Could this work for kids? I don't want anyone but myself to assess my personal portfolio, but there are many people who have every right to assess my professional work. Could kids create a personal portfolio and a professional portfolio (school stuff)? Would it help to separate the two?

Suzanne Harrington
Teacher, grades k-1
Quakertown, PA

And a third teacher expressed it this way:

As I see it, three components make up the portfolio process: self study, self-definition, and self disclosure. To begin, I must ask myself what objects or documents represent who I am as a reader/writer, or, more broadly, as a literate person., or, even more broadly, as a learner....self study is good...

Sharon Lundahl
Teacher, grade 8
Washington, D.C.

These teachers had all started to use portfolio process to learn more about the ways in which their students will learn to use the process and they discovered that they were learning in the process!

A different approach to the use of portfolios involved the TAP (Teacher Assessment Project) at Stanford University. Recently it completed a four year effort to explore and develop new approaches to teacher evaluation. The resulting prototypes were intended to assist the National Standards Board for Professional Teaching Standards in its creation of a voluntary program for national certification of teachers in elementary and secondary schools. In addition to simulated teaching situations, teacher portfolios were one of the strategies .

The report stated:

Portfolios are messy to construct, cumbersome to store, difficult to score, and vulnerable to misrepresentation. But, in many ways that no other assessment method can, portfolios provide a connection to the contexts and personal histories of real teaching and make it possible to document the unfolding of both teaching and learning over time.

Even though this project was one in which assessing good practice was the key function of the portfolio, there were other lessons to be learned. What should the size of the portfolio be?; how many lessons should be documented?; should video be required?; and should the portfolio just represent the teacher's best work?; were all questions the project staff had to struggle with. The teachers in the project helped the staff come to some concrete conclusions and recommendations for portfolio use as an assessment tool.

Both the Portfolio Portraits and the TAP project gave me many ideas for shaping my own model. In addition, the article *Research on Teaching and Teacher Research* (AERA, 1990) highlights the value of teachers who are engaged in self-directed inquiry about their work. In a compelling summary (Goswami and Stillman (1987) share what happens when teachers conduct research as part of their roles as teachers. Some highlights are; their teaching is transformed, their perceptions of themselves are transformed and they step up the use of resources, They become more active professionally, they become rich resources, they become observers over long periods of time, and they collaborate with their students. Even though this study was about teacher research it shows the value of teachers who are thinking about their own practice. I believe that teacher portfolios are a similar activity that can gain the same results.

Purpose

Portfolios have had different purposes as explained in previous models. The concept originally was used for student assessment and then was expanded to teacher assessment. Donald Graves in Chapter 1 *Portfolios: Keep A Good Idea Growing* of Portfolio Portraits gives an important message to all who want to work with this concept. He says, "As educators we are mere infants in the use of portfolios. Artists have used them for years as a means of representing the range and depth of their best and most current work." Yet, some groups have made rigid rules about the use of portfolios and some states have mandated them as assessment models. Graves continues, "Portfolios are simply too good an idea to be limited to an evaluation instrument." He encourages the staff of a school to keep portfolios and has been surprised to see how few have done it. To learn the process with students we need to learn it from the *inside* by doing it. He cautions educators not to limit the use of the concept and to broaden the purpose whenever possible to include the personal lives of students and teachers. He gives various suggestions for teacher portfolios that start in September and end in June becoming class histories. Teachers and students can collaborate to create this portfolio model.

His final reflection states,

The challenge to educators is to learn how to keep the portfolio movement fresh with information; sound participation by all persons, particularly teachers and students; and informed research. The health of the portfolio movement will be measured in the diversity of its practice and the breadth of its use, whether for evaluation or instruction.

In this paper, I have designed my use of a teacher portfolio to be an alternative to teacher evaluation programs in schools for experienced teachers. But, I recognize that the concept could be used for mentor teachers, student teachers, or other purely instructional models.

The Teacher Portfolio: Reflection In Action Model --- An Alternative to Traditional Evaluation

After reading the few articles I have cited and reflecting upon my own experience as a tenured twenty year classroom teacher, I have designed a model that could be used in a public school district (I will use my own district as the example). I say evaluation instead of supervision, because that is the form of supervision I have been part of for my twenty years as a teacher. Supervision implies a mutual conversation, a pre and post conference. We have not had that model.

Keeping Graves's recommendations in mind, I have tried to create a structure, but not one that is so rigid it prevents the teacher from creating or stretching the concept further. It will be a voluntary program that serves as a "professional development model more than an evaluative tool. The supervision will be "formative" rather than "summative." It will be a way for teachers to reflect upon their own practice while fulfilling the requirements of the contract at the same time.

I am adapting the contract language from North Andover Public Schools which includes the option of peer supervision for tenured teachers (The portfolio is not in their model. I have added it). According to the contract there are three categories of teachers in a school district;

1) tenured, 2) non-tenured and those in 3) need of assistance. The non-tenured and needs assistance group will continue to work with administrators. Non-tenured

teachers and teachers in need of assistance have evaluation/supervision issues that relate to hiring, firing or contract renewal. The tenured group this model would be available to are participating in evaluation every two years (as required by Massachusetts State Certification) and the evaluation serves as a "health check" rather than a hiring/firing procedure. Since the majority of teachers in a school system fall into the tenured category of healthy teachers, and since most observations from administrators (in my experience) have proven to be worthless, I offer this new approach as a means to self-directed inquiry. A way to improve upon a process that must take place by law anyway.

There are two components to the model (see diagram 1); The Teacher Portfolio 2) A Peer Sharing & Observation along with a new role for the administrator. The Peer component would consist of two teachers agreeing to work with each other for a school year. It is a combination of the peer observation model and the adaptation of the portfolio model from previous articles.

The role of the administrator would be one of facilitator and to "sign off" that the teacher had completed the requirements of the contract. He/she would still be ultimately responsible, but the principal's observation would be replaced with a peer observation and a portfolio. He/she would allow the two teachers to meet during the school day and if necessary he/she would cover a class to accommodate this. The principal would also meet with the teacher at the end of the year to review the portfolio and sign that the teacher had created an alternative plan , met with her partner, and completed the requirements of the plan. The teacher would share the portfolio with his/her partner in more detail throughout the year long process.

The teachers due for evaluation would be posted (this is normal procedure). Any teacher wishing to voluntarily take this option instead of the principal observation route would select a teacher from the evaluation list (then they would be reciprocal partners-both participating) or they could select any tenured teacher in the school who was not being evaluated that year. The two teachers would write the "portfolio plan" on one page and submit to principal for approval, so the timeline would be known ahead of time. It could extend into two years if the two teachers so desire. Their purpose would be to share, observe and support one another through the design of the portfolio.

The Teacher Portfolio option would fill two requirements of the contract, 1) the traditional principal observation 2) the course requirement due every three years. The pair would be required to have *at least* three meetings and one must involve an observation of some teaching that the teacher will be referring to in the portfolio. In addition the teacher must meet once with the principal at the end of the year to share highlights of the completed portfolio. This would be a minimum of four meetings, but probably many more if teachers get excited about the project. If both teachers are due for evaluation they would have *at least six meetings* so that each teacher would have time for discussion about their portfolio.

A meeting of all the teachers participating in this Teacher Portfolio option would be held by the principal. He/she would facilitate the meeting and lay out the guidelines and time lines. It could also be held as an "awareness" meeting about the program to encourage teachers to participate if they had not decide on the option, but wanted to know more information. Other meetings between teachers during the year might include discussions about what should be in the portfolio, how to select items to include, sharing philosophies or reflections about teaching, and setting goals for the observation. The teachers would be responsible for staying on the time line to complete the project.

A sample timeline for "Teacher Portfolio" option for a school year might look like this:

	September 15 - List of tenured teachers posted
	October 1 - Select a partner form the list or another teacher
1st mtng	November 15 - First meeting - Sharing ideas for creating portfolios, designing components for portfolio,
	December - work alone on portfolio, journal, video
	January - pre conference for observation/lesson in portfolio
2nd mtng	January - observation by peer
	January - post conference
	February -Work on portfolio, journal, video

3rd mtng March - meet with partner to review components of portfolio

4th mtng April - May - share portfolio with principal

5th mtng May (optional) Teacher Portfolio sharing ! All teachers who would like to share their completed portfolios !

Contents of the Portfolio

The teachers would have a range of choices as to what could actually be placed in the portfolio, however there would be three main categories to direct the design.

Part One, some aspect of the portfolio has to do with the teacher's **teaching** and must include a **philosophy** of education statement and examples of how this philosophy plays out in the classroom i.e. samples of student work, a video of a class, lesson plans, or examples of best lessons or lessons that failed and suggestions for improvement. *(This differs from the Stanford model that just requires BEST lessons)*

Part Two, a **reflective aspect** that includes *highlights* from a journal or responses to some reflective stems i.e. Things I've learned about myself this year... Things I've learned about my students,...I feel good about... I'm frustrated by... Something I'm going to work on... An area of strength I have...Some special things that happened this year... Something I learned from my students.etc.

Part Three, the **professional development** of the teacher. This could include any reading(books articles), college courses taken, presentations to other teachers, informal sharing with other schools, teacher exchanges, or attendance at workshops that have impacted the teacher's teaching.

Other ideas that may be included in the portfolio:

They may include diagrams of the classroom, a videos, a special project, photographs or drawings, bulletin boards, audio tapes etc. Any ideas that relate to the teachers' growth and development for that period of time.

The format could be an artist portfolio, a file box, a crate of materials or any creative way the teachers agree meet the goals of the portfolio. *Each entry in the portfolio must have an explanation so someone reading the portfolio could do so without the teacher present. The portfolio is NOT a scrapbook of artifacts, but rather a carefully selected and thought out representation of what the teacher thinks about teaching.*

This is not a collection of *everything* the teacher has done! It is a **SAMPLE** selected by the teacher (with assistance from a colleague) that best represents SOME aspects of this teacher's teaching and growth. The power of the portfolio is in the selection and the annotation about why each piece was selected.

Why would teachers and administrators ever encourage or select this option?

First of all administrators are required to observe and evaluate tenured teachers at least once every two years. With the majority of most teaching staffs in that category some districts have large numbers of teachers who need to participate in this process. From my experience it is a "walk through" "check off the list" type process that takes up everyone's time but is mainly useless to a teacher's reflection on teaching. I would think a principal would welcome eliminating evaluating the teachers from his list of things to do. This means the principal could then focus his/her evaluations on non-tenured teachers or those who had poor evaluations in the past and need assistance. This doesn't mean the principal can't informally view lessons or be in the classroom, it just means he/she doesn't have to do the paper work in the case of "healthy" teachers and could pass that accountability to the teachers themselves.

I would think teachers would welcome an opportunity to talk with a colleague. I don't believe everyone would take this option, but the teachers who want to grow would be able to do so. Even though it seems like more work it does take the place of a course requirement AND the principal evaluation. *(the course requirement*

elimination could only be used the first time the teacher chose portfolio as an option, the second time the portfolio & peer observation would just take the place of the principal observation. My reason being teachers need an incentive to try something new the first round and also building the portfolio for the first time is a more time-consuming process that updating it in the years to come.)

Teachers would benefit by feeling less isolated and having a greater opportunity to acknowledge themselves through their portfolios. They would also get to share themselves as "whole teachers" with the principal who through an observation may not get the full picture of a teacher.

A teacher observation would also benefit as the teacher observer because that teacher would probably look at her teaching more critically after seeing another classroom. In addition, the observing teacher would see new ways of doing things from the other teacher's point of view. I would recommend that some training/ guidelines be part of the teacher observation component to insure the teachers would be guiding not directing.

The school district would favor this because no money is involved, unless they wanted to provide substitutes for the teachers to meet with each other. Another use of the principal could be to have him/her cover and teach a lesson in each room once a year to free one of the teachers for an in school meeting ! An obvious benefit is the increased professional development and collegial interaction among teachers!

This concept is also compatible with current thinking in Massachusetts Education Reform Bills that call for "Professional Development Plans" designed by teachers to document their growth.

One potential drawback is that this looks like more work for a teacher. It would be new so teachers probably would be very cautious about trying it. Other potential drawbacks for this model have been pointed out by the TAP researchers involved in the Stanford portfolio project. They can be cumbersome, hard to judge, and diverse. In the Stanford project they were being used to judge good teaching for the purposes of national certification. In this model, principals and teacher colleagues would simply be *replacing* an observation by a principal for one by a teacher and adding a documentation of the said teacher's teaching instead of a college course. The principal in a sense would just be signing that the documentation was done and that

the three major required components were in the teacher's portfolio. Judgement about how good it was would not be a factor. The *process* would be a more important factor as opposed to finishing a perfect end *product*. The model reflects Grave's thinking of the "living portfolio" that grows and changes and can be added to or deleted from on a yearly basis.

Conclusion

The Teacher Portfolio as an alternative to a traditional program would give teachers an option they do not have at the present time. The pairing of teachers would break the isolation and give teachers an opportunity to share ideas about their portfolios and give each teacher a partner who was interested in the process. Formalizing this process of sharing validates the importance of the teacher's role in evaluation and supervision.

This self-directed approach is an important way to assist teachers in growing professionally because this approach forces them to focus upon their own practice in a meaningful way. Instead of being at the affect of a passive hierarchical evaluation process, teachers could choose to engage in an active on-going reflection of the work they have dedicated their lives to doing. Isn't that what learning should be about?

Future Steps

The "**Teacher Portfolio: Reflection in Action**" guides the teacher by structuring the reflection process, but it is just a beginning in what is possible. A next step after portfolios could be; teachers participating in teacher research; collecting classroom data, and writing articles about classroom practice. Partnerships with college professors could bring about working collaborations to bring forward the ideas and visions classroom teachers have about their own teaching. The guided inquiry of a college professor with the practical approach of a teacher could begin to "bridge the gap" between theory and practice.

Endnote:

Even though I have not participated fully in the whole alternative evaluation process, I have benefitted from creating a portfolio following the contents format I designed here. I have gained enormous insight into my own teaching by just beginning the process and by having to select a few teaching highlights. I've had to think about what is important to me. I believe, this is a process in which every teacher *should* engage on a regular basis.

I believe portfolios should be voluntary alternatives. By allowing a few energetic willing teachers to try this new idea, I think more teachers would be encouraged to participate each year. Good models for portfolios would be designed and could be used as models. Instead of mandating a "good idea" we would be creating a healthy environment in which a good idea good grow and develop on its own.

Both teachers and student teachers have responded positively to the portfolio concept. In a workshop with pairs of student teachers and cooperating teachers the following comments were shared at the end of the session.

Cooperating teachers shared:

This is an excellent concept for self-evaluation. It gives me the opportunity to delve into the things I take for granted - training, philosophy, style...

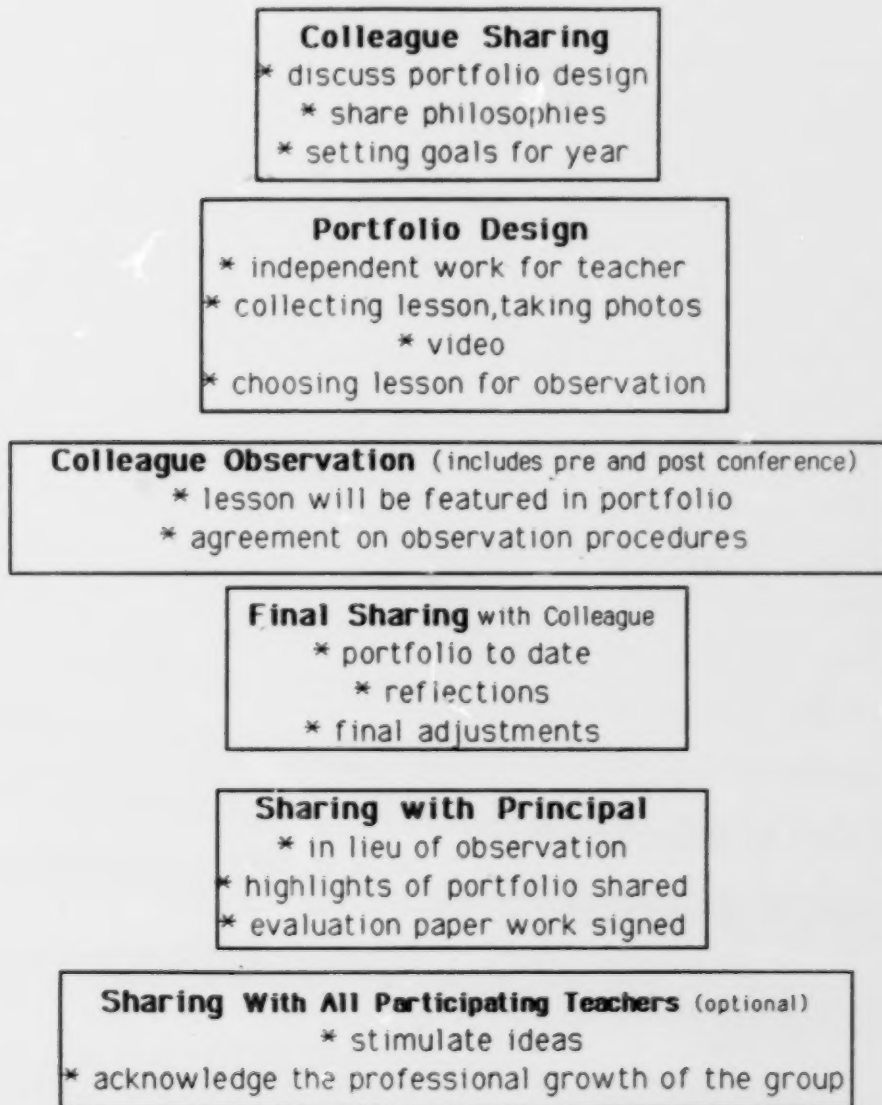
I see a portfolio as a benefit to my teaching because I feel this will enhance my teaching techniques, and force me to focus more on process (which I tend to overlook after all these years.) A portfolio will also be a great reflective too, because quite often we forget some of the more successful things we've accomplished and tend to focus on the negatives.

My initial feeling was excitement. Really focusing on what your teaching is about. Thinking about my philosophy makes me goal oriented and encourages me to grow as a teacher. I think I would like to make a portfolio- It sounds like fun!

I see the portfolio being very beneficial to the process of growth. It is a useful tool to evaluate strengths and to capture one's effectiveness in the classroom. I would create my portfolio to exemplify my desires to implement new modes of teaching in progress.

Diagram 1

Teacher Portfolio: Reflection In Action



Student teachers shared the following thoughts:

I see the portfolio as an "ice- breaker" (in a job interview). I consists of your most treasured work and allows you to share with others. I think a portfolio is just as beneficial and rewarding as a diploma!

It forces you to think about your objectives and goals in an organized way.

I think having a goal of making a portfolio will aid in my awareness of what kind of teacher I am. Realizing my philosophy and goals will make me a better teacher and it will show that learning never ends.

Cooperating teachers and student teachers can be partners in this reflective process. It was inspiring to listen to the teams talk with one another and share their ideas. Teacher portfolios can be one way to encourage this conversation. In Part 2 of this paper classroom teachers actually start to create their own portfolios. The format for the workshops and the teachers thought about portfolios are shared in *Creating Teacher Portfolios- The Dallin School Project*.

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Teacher Portfolio: Reflection in Action
Part 2

Creating Teacher Portfolios
The Dallin School Project

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Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational
Research Association, April 1994, New Orleans

Background Information

The Dallin School in Arlington has been working with Boston College as a pre-practicum site for student teacher placements. The principal and several teachers expressed an interest in working more closely as partners. I was interested in sharing the idea of teachers creating their own portfolios and had in fact invited several cooperating teachers to come to Boston College for a workshop. When a cooperating teacher from the Dallin School expressed an interest in the concept and said she had six other teachers who would come, I offered to do the workshop on site. My original intention was to just work with cooperating teachers and Boston College student teachers. However, the principal said many teachers were interested and could I present to the entire staff.

In early February 1994 I presented the concept of teacher portfolios to more than thirty faculty members. This included student teachers, and pre-practicum students from Boston College and another area college. The teachers agreed to actually go through the process of designing their own reflective portfolios by participating in two more group sessions and by agreeing to meet in small groups in between sessions.

This paper describes the three sessions and highlights the major themes that emerged related to teacher reflection. Using the Contents of a Portfolio model designed in *Reflection in Action: Part 1 - An Alternative to Teacher Evaluation*, I designed a workshop that could take teachers through the beginning steps of actually designing a portfolio. This three part workshop resulted in 15 teacher portfolios in progress and at least 5 more teachers who are thinking about their teaching in a new way.

Workshop Session 1

The purpose of this session was to engage the teachers in some reflective processes that would encourage them to think about committing to making their own portfolios. A brief overview giving the background of portfolios was given and then three activities were designed to have teachers think about their philosophies of education.

In the first process teachers had to write three words that described themselves as teachers and then share with a partner. The room was electric with teachers voices sharing ideas. They continued by writing beliefs about teaching and sharing with another partner. Finally, each teacher had to describe 3 lessons they had recently taught that were compatible with their beliefs and descriptions (see appendices part 1 process.)

At the end of the process teachers were sharing their ideas openly with one another and sharing lessons they found to be successful. It was inspiring to see such energy in the room after a long day of teaching students.

The workshop continued with a reflective process (appendices part 2) where each teacher selected a stem and wrote about it. Teachers were put into groups and shared their common ideas. The purpose of this exercise was to have teachers realize their thoughts are important. Again the noise level and willingness to share were extremely high.

I shared my portfolio samples and several student teacher models to show what was possible. The three basic components I was advocating were:

Part 1- A philosophy of education - with samples of student lessons that demonstrate the teacher's philosophy. Each lesson was to have a short description of why it was selected and perhaps how it was effective. This would make the portfolio different from a scrap book.

Part 2 - Reflections - this was the opportunity for the teacher to think about the classroom and share her ideas. We discussed many ways in which this could be done. Everyone agreed that a teacher's ideas and thoughts were important yet few had ever taken the time to write them down.

Part 3 - Professional Development - this would be the part of the portfolio where the teacher could record any other activities he participated in that enhanced his classroom teaching. In a brainstorming process teachers discovered they participate in many outside activities that help them in the classroom, but are not ordinarily recognized.

In addition to sharing sample portfolios that demonstrated the three parts, the teachers created possible ideas for their own portfolios. At the end of the one and half hours the teachers agreed to attend two more sessions and start the portfolio process.

At the end of the session the teachers' comments included:

"I think portfolios are a great idea!"

"The session made me really think about myself as a teacher and what my philosophy is."

"I see the portfolio will help me see myself as a teacher."

"I am beginning to visualize my ideas -- the processes have really forced me to think about my philosophy."

Only one teacher spoke negatively about portfolios and her comment was, "I don't have time to stop my action of teaching to reflect." Her reasoning was that great artists just created they didn't stop and think about it. She didn't see how doing a portfolio could help her. It would only take time away from her dedicated schedule that put the students first. The principal later shared with me that this was one of his best teachers and she was extremely creative and dedicated to students.

My impressions after the first session were positive, yet I wondered if teachers would come back to a part two especially after the negative comment was made by a well respected good teacher. I left two articles to read and asked each teacher to start thinking about how she would like to document her work. I suggested she keep a camera in the classroom and to audio tape, video tape, and start keeping a journal.

Workshop Session 2

All of the teachers returned except the teacher who spoke against the concept. It seems to be that she did not negatively impact any of the other teachers. The session began with an introductory activity to bring the group back together. I asked each teacher to write on an index card 5 decisions they had already made about their portfolio. This could be as simple as ... I decided to use a black case... I will put a video of a science lesson into the back pocket.... I will take some photos.... etc. The activity was shared in small groups and teachers were encouraged to copy anyone else's good ideas. The room vibrated with the energy these teachers generated from their thinking. They had had two weeks between sessions and several teachers came in with cases, three ring binders and photos to look through.

The workshop continued with small groups brainstorming possible ideas to the following questions:

- What could I use for a portfolio?
- How could I include my philosophy creatively?
- How could I create a theme for my portfolio?
- What types of artifacts could I include?

Each group reported their lists by using an overhead transparency and I observed teachers in the room busily copying down their colleagues suggestions.

The next part of the workshop was called " Getting Started" and small groups shared drafts of their teaching philosophies written between sessions or started to make sample portfolios out of paper. The teams were formed by upper elementary and lower elementary and within each team pairs were made to support one another. We agreed we would meet in a month to give everyone a chance to work. The assignment was to get started to complete a finished product.

At the end of the session I asked everyone to answer this question, "What have you learned about yourself as a teacher since you started these portfolio workshops?"

Some of the teachers comments included:

"I know I am not the only person who is uncertain about what to do! That makes me feel better."

"For the first time I really reflected on what I've done for the past 24 years!"

"I discovered that it will be an analytical process to decide what my message is to others about what I do."

"I like the fact that I am unique and that I can do whatever I would like in my portfolio".

"I am reflecting more on my teaching."

I continued to notice how the teachers were surprised by their own reflections. They also shared how they felt good about all they have done and never had taken the time to sort out all the things they do. We decided the final session would be a "come as you are party" and teachers could share their portfolios in progress. Food would be part of the celebration and sharing ideas session.

Workshop Session 3

When I entered the room everyone was out of their seats going around the room looking at their colleagues' portfolios. I could hear comments like, "Wow, that is so great," and "Oh, I didn't know you taught that lesson." There was a feeling of pride in the room. Several teachers pointed me toward portfolios teachers had dropped off to share because some teachers couldn't be at the session. They were all unique. Reflecting upon their teaching had demonstrated itself in many different ways. One teacher had a small collection of photos not quite put together in any format and his colleague shared with me that he had bought a camera and was using it for the first time in the classroom. Another teacher had a complete portfolio with photos, video tapes, and articles. One teacher said, "We HAD to make them (portfolios) because we knew you were coming back to see them!"

We started with a discussion about what frustrated them about doing this

portfolio project. The top reason was -- not enough time to do it! Another thing they found difficult was compressing so many years into one portfolio. Actually knowing what to select and how to present it was difficult. One teacher shared that she knew she had done something 8 years ago that worked really well and now she couldn't remember all of the pieces and it frustrated her to think the idea was lost. We discussed the idea of leaving a legacy for the profession and how doctors and lawyers have cases that reflect their practice, why shouldn't teachers leave examples of good practice! Even though there were frustrations the teachers clearly felt proud of the work they had accomplished in selecting and documenting their practice. All this in two short months!

I asked what supported them in doing the portfolio - and what guiding principles made it easy for them to design a portfolio. They responded as follows:

1. Having the three part workshop worked because they had time to think about the project, yet they knew I was coming back to actually see some finished products.
2. Many teachers liked the beginning processes that had them think about their philosophies. There was a structure -- but within it there was flexibility.
3. Teachers liked the idea that the portfolio was theirs -- meaning they didn't feel they had to compare it to each other. The room clearly acknowledged the gifts of the various teachers.
4. They felt I was open as a presenter to any creative possibilities they may come up with and they liked that because it didn't structure them too much.
5. Working together and sharing in small groups and pairs assisted many teachers in creating their portfolios. The collegiality made a difference.

The final session was a celebration. At the first session I was the only teacher with a camera- taking photos of teachers working in groups (for my portfolio). At the final session, four other teachers brought cameras and we all took pictures of teachers with their portfolios. It was fun!

Teachers' Reflections On The Process of Creating Portfolios

I asked the teachers to respond in writing to the process of creating their own portfolios (see appendices -Final Reflections).

One question was... **What was enjoyable?** Responses included...

" I enjoyed doing it (that surprised me!) I guess reflecting I enjoyed reflecting on some of the things I had done."

" Memories"

" Thinking about my teaching career and children and colleagues I have worked with."

"The reflection was the most enjoyable part. Thinking about what I wanted to put in." The development was quite enjoyable."

" Thinking about my job and what it means to be a teacher."

"I am excited about the process of showing what we do..."

Another question was....**Tell me something you have learned about yourself as a teacher from participating in this process.**

Three themes emerged from the responses.

Theme 1) teachers were able to acknowledge they had done some good work

Theme 2) teachers acknowledged they needed to change

Theme 3) teachers recognized the importance of reflection

1) ... good work...

"Kids are lucky to have me as a teacher!"

"I think I learned that I have a lot to be proud of - I could focus on that more than how frustrated I feel."

2)...need for change...

"I have a lot to learn, but the more I do this (portfolio) the more the memories and rewards will grow."

"I need to become more organized ."

3)... importance of reflection...

"How I have changed as a teacher."

"Seeing myself on video helped me to evaluate my style."

"I really didn't realize how much I have changed as a teacher. The process has so gradually evolved. I was not really aware it was happening."

A final question asked how they thought portfolios could enhance the teaching profession.

Several teachers focused on the practical aspects of documenting work for the future to share with student teachers, however, the overwhelming responses that expressed value for the teacher related to the reflective aspect of the process. The teachers appreciated the fact that the portfolio created an opportunity for them to reflect upon their own practice. All the responses were positive.

The themes were :

- 1) improving self esteem by acknowledging positive aspects of work
- 2) sharing ideas with student teachers
- 3) reflecting to learn more about yourself as a teacher

Some teachers used the portfolio to feel better about themselves as teachers.

"Putting a portfolio together helped me to focus on all the positive things I have done. Having it together in one place made me feel good about what I have done, and what I can do. and what I would like to do!"

Another said, *"It is great to feel that I can "blow my own horn." I am so used to building someone else's self esteem that it is nice to take care of me too!"*

Other teachers highlighted the importance of having something concrete to share with student teachers.

"It is a great idea to have a portfolio specifically for student teachers to look at, to use when is needed as there is so little time to sit down and talk with them."

Other teachers actually wrote about the reflective aspect.

"It (the portfolio) helps you reflect on who you are and what you believe in...."

"It certainly can introduce a student teacher to a classroom. It also makes me reflect on my teaching."

Another teacher said, *"It is a nice place for reflection. It helps me understand myself better as a person and a teacher."*

Finally one teacher summed it up this way.

"It (the portfolio) takes one back into the reflective philosophical parts which are sometimes forgotten in the day to day teaching."

The teachers were energized by the three session workshop, but what made me feel more positive is that they actually had portfolios to share in the future so the energy could continue. I asked several teachers to share their ideas at a conference with me and they were very willing. One cooperating teacher student teacher pair was excited to share their process of working as a team!

My Final Reflections

As I completed the three sessions I had a chance to reflect upon the process and how I think it affected the teachers. I noticed three things.

1) Reflection does not have to be an isolated silent activity. In fact, this group was noisy engaging and quite actively involved. Reflection also involves talking. It doesn't look like silent writing in a journal.

2) Reflection is emotional. Many teachers shared the memories that surfaced as they reviewed photos or analyzed lessons. One teacher said she cried as she remembered some things. Others laughed and felt a range of emotions that were not all positive. Reflections could also be frustrating.

3) Pre-service and Inservice Teachers can reflect together. Pre-practicum students, first year teachers, experienced teachers of 24 years, interns and student teachers were all in this group. They all contributed to each other and the experienced teachers did not take the lead and tell the novices what to do or how to do it. Everyone struggled writing a philosophy and it was good for the beginners to see the more experienced teachers reflect with them.

I see this project as a success and I would like to continue to create opportunities for pre-service and inservice teachers to reflect together. A teacher portfolio is one tool that can be used to reach that goal.

Teacher Portfolio Part 1

My Philosophy...

3 words that describe my teaching...

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

3 phrases related to my beliefs about teaching...

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Now write sentences and a one page philosophy

3 Lessons that demonstrate my philosophy...

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Teacher Portfolio Part 2

REFLECTIONS

Things I have learned about myself as a teacher...

A professional development activity I am involved in...

One thing I would like to work on

Something I am proud of....

What I have learned from my students...

A goal I have for this school year...

I am frustrated by...

Part 3 Professional Development

What have I done outside the classroom?

books, conferences, committees, leadership roles, presentations etc.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Designing My Portfolio

How should I document my work?

Boston College

Office of Professional Practicum Experiences

1. How did you actually put your portfolio together? What did you do first, second, etc.? What was your process of elimination?

2. What was the most enjoyable part of the process of making a portfolio?

3. What was the most difficult part? What made it so difficult?

4. Does your portfolio have a theme? What is it and why did you select it? How does your theme reflect your philosophy/ personality?

5.If you don't have a theme--what format did you use to weave your portfolio together?

6. How does your portfolio reflect your philosophy/beliefs about teaching?

7. Tell me something you learned about yourself as a teacher from participating in this process.

8. How do you think a teacher portfolio can enhance the teaching profession? (for student teachers and/or classroom teachers)